Myths About Bullying

Myth 1: ***Bullying is a normal part of growing up. It's just "kids being kids."***

Reality: It is a very dangerous and widely accepted myth. Bullying can be devastating and can have lasting effects on the psychological well-being of children. The act of bullying can indicate a serious emotional problem; children who bully others are more likely to commit crimes.

Myth 2*:* ***Bullying just toughens you up.***

Reality: Children who experience bullying are in the same league as all people who suffer harassment, abuse, trauma, and violence. Being a victim does not "toughen up" a child; instead it often causes long-lasting psychological injury and illness.

Myth 3: ***If you ignore a bully, he or she will go away.***

Reality: Unfortunately, the research does not support this. Ignoring a bully often results in increased attention from the bully who is anxious to get a response from the victim. This is especially true with cyber bullies who often use their anonymity to stalk and hound their victims.

Myth 4: ***Kids don't tell adults about bullying***.

Reality: If children have caring, concerned adults in their lives who take the time to ask them, they may disclose if they are being bullied.

For more information on bullying, you may access the following websites:

www.pathway –pals.com

www.olweus.org/public/bullying.page

www.stopbullyingnow.com

www.hildagraham.com/Resources.html

State Office of Victim Assistance

Edgar Brown Building, Room 401
1205 Pendleton Street
Columbia, S.C. 29201
Phone: 803.734.1900 Fax: 803.734.1708
Victim's Line: 800.220.5370

www.sova.sc.gov

BULLYING

It's Not Okay

An informational brochure by the

State Office of Victim Assistance

What is Bullying ?

Bullying is when one person or group of people repeatedly picks on another who is seen as weaker or more vulnerable. Bullying is different from fighting and teasing. What makes it different is the way the bully repeatedly shows power over the other person. Bullies try to control other children by using scare tactics. Being controlled and repeatedly picked on can make a person a victim.

Bullying can come in several forms:

* **Physical:** causing bodily harm.
* **Verbal:** using written or spoken words that are cruel or that put someone down.
* **Emotional:** hurting someone's feelings.
* **Sexual:** meaning sexually harassing.

Bullying can be:

* **Direct:** such as hitting, teasing or threatening.
* **Indirect:** such as excluding, spreading rumors, internet harassment or manipulation.

Bullying Help for Parents

If you suspect a child is being bullied, find a comfortable place and ask what is going on. Say things like:

- I'm worried about you. Is there something you want to talk about?
- You seem kind of down about things. Do you want to talk?
- How are things going at school? Do you have friends to hang out with? People you feel comfortable with?

The most important thing you can do is really listen. Bullies often intimidate victims into silence, and it could be difficult for your child to talk about what's going on. Real listening means that you will:

- Take whatever time that is needed.
- Don't minimize the pain.
- Try to see the situation from the child's point of view.
- Gather information. (Write down what the child says for further reference.)
- Be approachable. Let the child know that you will be there to help whenever she or he needs you.

The LAW and Bullying

While there is no federal law that addresses bullying behavior specifically, amendments to the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act requires states, districts and schools to design and implement bullying and harassment prevention policies.

SAFE SCHOOL CLIMATE ACT

In South Carolina, the "Safe School Climate Act" was passed June, 2006. **Section 59-63-130** makes it unlawful for a person to engage in harassment, intimidation, or bullying. It is the responsibility of anyone who witnesses a bullying incident to report it to the appropriate school official.

Section 59-63-140 requires that local school districts adopt polices prohibiting harassment and establish bullying prevention programs. These policies should minimally include:

- A statement prohibiting harassment
- The definition of bullying and harassment
- A description of appropriate student behavior
- Consequences and appropriate remedial action for a person who commits these infractions.

Check with your local School Board for more information on the policies in your area.